

Taking Care--Documenting the Occupational Culture of Home Care Workers
Archie Green Fellows Project, 2014-2015
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Archive of Folk Culture, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

**Victoria Tenbusch interview, 2014-11-20 : interview conducted by Michael
Robert Bussel**

INTERVIEW LOG

00:01:15: Name is Victoria Tenbusch. Previously worked in apple and pear orchards. Marries, then works in cannery for 13 years and is member of Teamsters union. Becomes certified nurse's aide for 15 years. Retires, then has worked as home care worker for last year and one-half.

00:02:35: Light workload in home care. People do lots for themselves. Cleans house, does shopping, a little cooking. Provides companionship, visits with people who are alone. Currently cares for two people.

00:03:44: Upset at cannery and looks for other work. Sister-in-law had been a certified nurse's aide and encouraged her to enter that line of work. Takes classes at local community college. Liked work in nursing home, most of it was good. Decides to retire, moving slower than younger people. Person she had cared for in nursing home sought her out as caregiver.

00:05:30: Caregiving more personal than other jobs. Must do things that people want you to do. People sometimes grouchy, but glad you are there.

00:06:15: People need compassion. They are the boss. Advantage to have been nurse's aide previously. Learned other skills in home setting. Work is like taking care of your own home. Desire to help somebody else.

00:08:04: Talks about workday. Does dishes, makes bed, vacuums, or sweeps. Goes to store and shops. Returning items can be complicated. Likes it when person she cares for can accompany her on errands. Takes client to doctor's office, bingo, or out on drives.

00:10:53: Clients consider her their best friend. Doesn't want family relationship and tries to back off. Use tact to create distance. One lady took her to grandchildren's home. Client also wants her to take her to parks or on picnics.

00:12:59: Does get emotionally involved with her clients. Misses them when they are in hospital. People talk to her about their families and their problems.

00:15:22: Talks with other caregivers about their jobs. Gets hints and ideas about how to handle certain situations. Not much shop talk compared to other jobs. Like taking care of your aunt or uncle in their home.

00:17:22: Lots of stress on job. Must do things exactly the way client wants. Sometimes people do not feel good, can be angry, emotional, or stressed. Negotiation when you work in someone else's home. Can be fired by client, if they don't like the way you are doing your job. Need to know how people you care for want things done.

00:19:05: Has taken care of several men. Took care of sister-in-law's client when she was away. Got list of tasks and did them. Women can be more specific in telling you what they want done.

00:20:32: Having a sense of humor is important. Things come up that you just chuckle or laugh about. Caregivers don't joke about work with other. Confidentiality limits joking about work.

00:22:24: Most gratifying part of work is getting out of the home. Likes visiting people and making sure they are okay.

00:22:46: Most challenging part of work is putting up with moods and mood changes. Has to listen to people who are in pain, brooding, say they wish they could die. Glad that people can stay in their homes. In nursing home, used to hear people say they wanted to be home.

00:25:01: Always believed in having a union. Able to give clients better service due to higher pay and receiving medical care. If she wasn't making above the national average for wages for home care workers, probably would not be doing it.

00:26:45: Told story about job to state legislator. At SEIU Council meeting in Albany, shook hands with Jeff Merkley (Oregon US Senator). Need more resources for nursing homes. Some people in Salem don't want unions. Recalls wearing purple with other union members in gallery at state capitol.

00:30:11: Union is us, not you. People don't understand this. Union is not an outside force.

00:31: 10: No difference in caring for men or women. Men do not watch you as much as women do. Women are picky. Man says make it clean, make it nice. Women say how I want it folded, how I want it put away.

00:33:23: If they smoke, you come home smelling like a cigarette. Current clients do a lot for themselves.

00:36:17: People would be surprised to learn that you can have a lot of fun being a caregiver.

00:36:32: When not working, likes to do puzzles, work in garden, play computer games, read play pinochle, go walking.

00:38:20: Uses “client” to describe people she cares for. Doesn’t like the word “customer.” On a first name basis with all her clients.